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SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: TSPA SENV KSCA BR
SUBJECT: BRAZIL: RECOVERED SPACE-OBJECT SAFELY RETURNED TO U.S. AIR FORCE IN THE UNITED STATES

REF: (A) BRASILIA 296, (B) 2008 STATE 87179B), (C) 2008 STATE 87179, (D) E-MAIL D.REICHEL (USAF) - R.DRISCOLL MAY 28, 2009

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¶1. (SBU) On June 2, 2009, Post received from the U.S. Air Force confirmation that a piece of an Atlas rocket that had broken off and landed in Brazil had completed its journey and arrived safely on May 27 at the USAF's Aerospace Materials Laboratory in El Segundo, California, for scientific analysis and testing (REF D). The object was a composite overwrapped pressure vessel (COPV) and had come off an Atlas rocket launched in October 2007. In March 2008, it fell back to earth and landed in a rural part of the State of Goias, Brazil. Working in coordination with the USAF, the Post persuaded the Brazilian Ministry of Exterior Relations and the Ministry of Science and Technology to return the object. (REFTELS A, B and C) The Post recovered the object from the Brazilians on March 5, 2009. After it was inspected by a team of experts from the USAF's Space and Missile Center, the object was then transported to El Segundo, California.

¶2. (SBU) Officials from the USAF's Space and Missile Center indicate that the experience in arranging for the recovery and return of the object should help them with executing future such recoveries. Also, the USAF informed Post that it will conduct tests to assess reentry damage and estimate peak reentry temperatures. The USAF expected that "useful data should be obtained from our investigation."

SOBEL